AISI

Alberta Initiative for School Improvement

Communications Toolkit

Sharing Information About AISI

AISI Communications Working Group

February 2007

College of Alberta School Superintendents · AHSCA · AISI University Partners · A·S·B·A Alberta School Boards Association · ASBOA · Magistri Neque Servi 1915 · Alberta Education

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AISI

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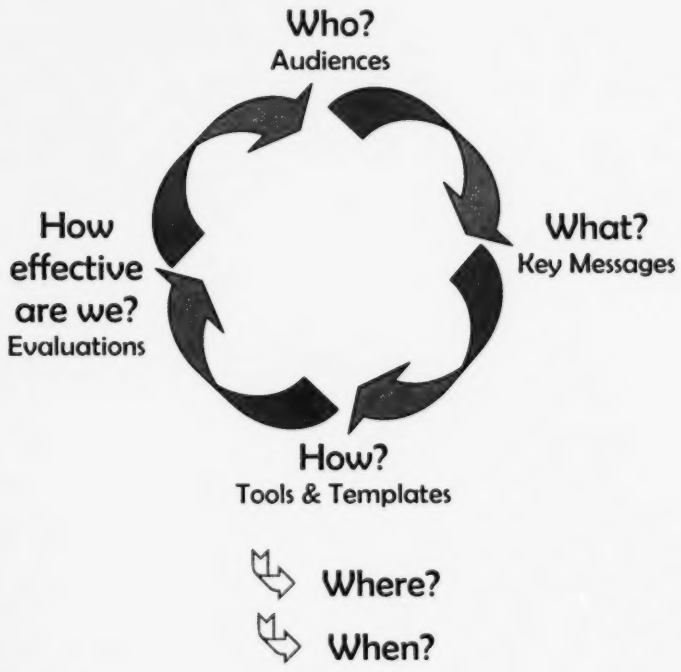
A. Introduction

Creating awareness of the success of AISI

The Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) has seen tremendous success in classrooms across the province since it began in 1999. This package is intended to help you inform your communities about your local projects and as a result increase support for AISI as a whole.

The goal of this package is to help you, the AISI coordinator, in raising the profile of your AISI projects at the local level. So how can you do this? It comes down to thinking about four questions:

1. Who are you trying to reach? (Audiences)
2. What do you want them to know? (Key Messages)
3. How are you going to tell them? (Tools & Templates)
4. How will you know if it worked? (Evaluation)



B. Audiences

Potential Audiences

Before considering the information you would like the public to know about AISI, it is important to think about who you are trying to reach. Different audiences may require different forms of communication.

Some potential audiences:

1. School Staff
2. School Boards
3. Parents
4. Community
    - General public
    - Local politicians
    - Businesses
    - Seniors
5. Media

Sharing your AISI news with school staff
(teachers, principals, support staff)

- **Speak with key staff one-on-one**
  If several teachers are involved with the AISI project, involve them in the development of the information sharing initiatives. Ask for their help as you move this forward.

- **Give a brief presentation at a staff meeting**
  Early in the school year, ask for a spot on the staff meeting agenda. Provide a brief update to staff about your AISI project(s), recognize staff who are involved and talk about your plans to share the news with parents and the community. Ask for your colleagues' support.

- **Include an AISI session at your jurisdiction's Professional Development Day**
  Present a "carousel" of AISI projects to your colleagues. If there is a jurisdiction-wide initiative, focus on it.

- **Submit your AISI stories and pictures to the *ATA News***
  Another tool to reach teachers is by submitting AISI stories and pictures to *The ATA News*. Contact Managing Editor Raymond Gariepy at (780) 447-9438 or 1-800-232-7208 toll-free in Alberta. His email is Raymond.gariepy@ata.ab.ca
  Following is the link to that publication.
  http://www.teachers.ab.ca/Quick+Links/Publications/ATA+News/Index

- **Contact a member of your local ATA executive to get your AISI news on the local's website and/or newsletter**

- **Submit your AISI stories to Alberta Education for inclusion in the *School Improvement Scoop***
  http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/special/aisi/aisidocs/nletters.asp

- **Use your school bulletin board**
  Display pictures and include a brief write-up describing your goals and the progress to date. Save the display so you can use it every year.

Sharing your AISI news with the school board

(superintendents, trustees, other jurisdiction leadership staff)

- **Meet with the superintendent or designate to discuss presenting your AISI project to the board**
  Enlist his/her help in making a presentation to the school board about the jurisdiction's AISI projects. He/she can give you guidance about timing and approach when you present to the board. If possible include a hands-on demonstration of some of the teaching techniques. Encourage the board to make an effort to inform other audiences.

- **Invite the board to a classroom demonstration about AISI**

- **Submit a few paragraphs describing your board presentation to central office staff for inclusion in "board highlights" and/or the jurisdiction newsletter**

- **Invite the trustee/the board to see your school/jurisdiction AISI project in action in a classroom**

- **Write an article about your AISI project for your jurisdiction's newsletter & website** – (*see newsletter section in Tools & Templates)*

Sharing your AISI news with parents

- **Ask parents for advice and guidance before you start communicating**
  Meet with four or five parents. Explain that your goal is to get the word out about the school's AISI project. Ask them for their advice about
  - how to do it
  - what to include in the information
  - what works best in your community
- **Include regular articles about your project(s) in the school newsletter**
  Talk about your educational goals and your outcomes. Remember to weave in the key messages about the overall focus of these projects – to introduce innovations in classrooms that help children learn.
- **Make an annual presentation to your school council**
  Reach out to these key communicators – and they will help spread the word. Ask the principal if you can get an item on the agenda. Advertise the presentation well in advance. As well as talking about project goals and progress to date, bring your project to life by demonstrating some new teaching techniques you are using or by having students demonstrate. Are there things parents can do at home to support your efforts?
- **Invite parents to your classroom to see AISI in action**
  Invite parents in to see the project in action. Again, students could demonstrate the new approach or you could teach a demonstration lesson and invite parents to ask questions afterwards. Invite parents to reinforce your work at home. This would be a great Education Week project.
- **Use your school bulletin board**
  Display pictures and include a brief write-up describing your goals and the progress to date. Save the display so you can use it every year.
- **Create an AISI project section on your school website**
  Feature photos and a brief description of your project and its outcomes. Given the nature of the website, you will be able to provide more detailed information.
- **Include an AISI station at your annual "meet the teacher" night**
  Depending on the format of your evening, you could feature a demonstration lesson and hand out tips about at-home activities parents can do to support the AISI focus.
- **Offer a parent workshop**
  Parents love information about what they can do at home to support their children's learning. Start the session with a brief description of your AISI project and its goals. Then show the parents one or two strategies they can use at home to work with their children. Make this session hands-on. Advertise it well in advance.
- **If you have a jurisdiction council of school councils, ask to make a presentation**
- **Encourage the establishment of a multi-school celebration night demonstrating AISI projects**

Sharing your AISI news with the community

Beyond the walls of the school there is the community. Sometimes the general community is forgotten when thinking about communicating what a school is doing. However, this is a critical audience as it includes taxpayers, future parents, grandparents, and many other people who have a general interest in what's happening in the schools in their community.

One key way to communicate to this audience is through your local media. (*see media section)*

You could also incorporate some of the same ideas used when communicating with parents:

- **Hold an open house for the community.** Ask the local paper to put in a public service announcement letting the community know you will have the open house.
  - Invite any local community groups that might be interested to see your project in action.
  - Drop off notices at local businesses.

- **Contact your local politicians and provide them with background on your project**. Elected officials want to know what's happening in their community.
  - Ask your local MLA about drafting a column on the success of your project for the local paper; provide him/her with any background needed.

- **Contact local service clubs.** Many community/business service organizations are interested in education issues. Offer to make a presentation at a luncheon or dinner meeting to showcase local projects.

- **Contact local seniors' organization.** Many seniors are grandparents who still have an interest in the education system. A display or brief presentation at the seniors' centre may, in turn, result in members interested in volunteering at the local school.

Sharing your AISI news with the media

Picking up the phone and calling your local media directly can sometimes be the most effective way to encourage journalists to cover your story. Before doing so you should contact your central office. Your school jurisdiction may have a media relations policy that you will need to be aware of. Also keep FOIPP requirements in mind. If you plan to invite media to your classroom you will need to ensure they can talk to the students (plan to ask parents in advance.)

- **Ask your local media to see your AISI project in action**
  Pitch your story to your local reporter(s). In your pitch be clear about your project goals and your desired outcomes. Always keep in mind the 5 W's (who, what, where, when, and why). Reporters will be looking for this information. Someone should be assigned and available to talk about:
  - Who is involved and where
  - What your project is
  - What you are doing differently
  - What you seek to achieve by making the change (why)
  - What data you might have available to demonstrate the impact your project is having (why)

  It's also a good idea to have a quick tip sheet available describing the basics of the program and your key messages. This gives reporters something they can take away and refer to and may make it a little easier for them to cover your story. By sharing your AISI news with the media you will in turn be informing the general public about your project and its progress.

- **Provide a generic template for media contacts**

- **Provide media with a list of all the AISI projects in your school**
  Include descriptions of those projects, and extend a standing invitation to have media come and photograph any of the AISI classes or activities in action. Local newspapers are often looking for pictures and like to have something in the hip pocket to slip in for a quick picture. The key here is to provide them with a "cut line" that quickly describes the project, and includes the words: *School jurisdiction AISI project xyz is aimed at helping students abc.*

- A tool for AISI coordinators to reach the media is *The ATA News Media Directory 2006/07*. This is a handy directory that has the names and contact information of all media outlets in Alberta. The media outlets are conveniently listed by region. Copies are available free to all ATA members and are $4 plus GST for non-ATA members. AISI coordinators wishing to order a copy can contact Ian Campbell in ATA distribution at ian.campbell@ata.ab.ca or call him at (780) 447-9400 (ext 321) or 1-800-232-7208 toll-free in Alberta.

C. AISI Facts

The key messages (found in the Tools & Templates section) can be used in responding to questions about AISI. They also could be included as part of a fact sheet about your own project. Here are some key points about AISI.

- The goal of AISI is to improve student learning and performance by supporting projects that address unique needs and circumstances within school authorities.

- Funding for AISI comes from annual grants from Alberta Education. AISI funding is targeted, which means it is provided to school authorities for specific local initiatives that are focused on improving student learning.

- AISI was designed and developed through collaboration between Alberta Education and its education partners:
  - Alberta Home & School Councils' Association
  - Alberta School Boards Association
  - Alberta Teachers' Association
  - Association of Alberta School Business Officials of Alberta
  - College of Alberta School Superintendents
  - University Faculties of Education (Alberta, Calgary, Lethbridge, Campus Saint Jean)

- A cornerstone of AISI's success has always been the collective spirit and wisdom of individuals and stakeholder groups to commit to the AISI partnership.

Further key messages and fact sheets provided in Tool & Templates section.

D. Tools & Templates

At times you may find that some specific tools are required to help you inform the public about your AISI project. This section provides a list of potential tools including some samples and templates that you may find useful.

1. Key Messages/ Fact Sheet
   - Examples of how to explain AISI in a simple and concise way
   - A draft Fact Sheet
   - Facts About AISI: http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/special/aisi/whatisaisi.asp

2. Questions and Answers
   - Sample questions and answers

3. PowerPoint
   - Sample PowerPoint

4. Media releases
   - Tips on working with the media and a sample news release

5. Videos/DVDs
   - A sample DVD and tips on how to put one together

6. Newsletters
   - Tips on preparing a newsletter and samples

7. Websites
   - Links to websites that may be helpful
   - AISI website http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/special/aisi/

Key Messages

The key messages can be used in responding to questions about what AISI is, and also could be included as part of a fact sheet about your own project.

AISI . . . is a program to improve student learning and performance
AISI . . . supports locally determined projects that address specific learning needs
AISI . . . is funded by Alberta Education to individual school jurisdictions

Since 1999, education professionals across Alberta have embraced this opportunity and have created about 1,300 innovative projects that meet students' needs in local communities. Project themes include literacy, numeracy, technology, differentiated instruction, and high school completion.

Local Messaging

AISI

You should be able to explain in brief what your local AISI project can do for students. Our local AISI project is _____. It focuses on .....

Some examples

Chinook's Edge School Division – Writing
The purpose of this AISI project is to increase students' writing competency and attitudes towards writing. It focuses on developing a consistent approach to the teaching of writing, through a shared vision by teachers, to improve students' writing ability.

Lethbridge School District – Math Mania
This project aims to improve students' numeracy skills and to enhance the home/school partnership in building those skills. It focuses on developing teaching strategies to increase student understanding and extends beyond the classroom to include sessions for parents and Home Math Kits for home skill development. (Grades K-5, two schools)

Red Deer School District – Instructional Strategies to Improve Math
This project focuses on incorporating professional learning communities where teachers are given professional development opportunities with a focus on developing effective strategies to improve student learning in math. (Grades 6-9, five schools)

AISI Fact Sheet: AISI at a Glance

Highlights

- Started in 1999
- Uses 3-year operating cycles, 2 have been completed (2000 - 2006)
- Currently in its 3rd cycle (2006 - 2009)
- $400M invested to 2006
- Almost 1,300 innovative projects have been created to meet students' needs
- Partner collaboration includes:
  - Alberta Education
  - Alberta Home & School Councils' Association (AHSCA)
  - Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA)
  - Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA)
  - Association of School Business Officials of Alberta (ASBOA)
  - College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS)
  - University Faculties of Education
- Information and results are widely shared through conferences, reports, AISI website, and networking

Principles

1. Funding will flow to school jurisdictions and charter schools based upon approved proposals for improving student learning and performance.
2. Proposals can be multi-year (maximum of 3 years) but must have interim (at least annual) progress measurement targets. Continued funding depends upon evidence of success.
3. Funding consisting of an equal amount per registered FTE (Full Time Equivalent) student will be based upon the previous year's September 30th count.
4. The jurisdiction proposal needs to be part of the three-year planning and reporting process for purposes of the school jurisdiction's annual planning, reporting and accountability processes.
5. There will be an appropriate balance of local and provincial measures of performance that includes approved quantitative and/or qualitative measures.
6. Project results will be shared with Alberta school jurisdictions and others while Alberta Education will act as the "clearinghouse" on behalf of all partners.
7. Given that collaboration is an essential element for school improvement, proposals should reflect support of those who will implement the projects and include meaningful involvement of the school community.

Questions and Answers

What is AISI?

- a program to improve student learning and performance
- a program that supports locally determined projects that address specific learning needs
- funded by Alberta Education to individual school jurisdictions

What is an AISI project?

It identifies specific goals for student growth, achievement and improvement in areas of knowledge, skills, attitudes or behaviors. The project then implements appropriate intervention strategies and evaluates their impact on student learning.

Who is involved with an AISI project?

Teachers, parents, staff, students, communities and the school jurisdictions work together.

Where do I get more information about AISI?

Speak to your principal or jurisdiction office, call Alberta Education at (780) 427-3160 or visit the AISI website at www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/special/aisi/default.asp .

When did the AISI program begin?

The AISI program was initiated by Alberta Education in 1999.

How long does the program run?

The AISI program uses 3-year operating cycles. Two cycles have been completed (2000 - 2006) and it is currently in its 3rd cycle (2006 - 2009).

How much money has been invested in AISI?

$400M has been invested to 2006.

How many AISI projects have been created?

Approximately 1,300 innovative projects have been created to meet students' needs.

Who is involved with the AISI program?

A committee of education partners collaborates to provide direction and support including:

Alberta Education (AE)
Alberta Home & School Councils' Association (AHSCA)
Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA)
Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA)
Association of School Business Officials of Alberta (ASBOA)
College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS)
University Faculties of Education

How are program information and project results shared?
Information and results are widely shared through conferences, reports, the AISI website and networking.

What are AISI project topics?
Project themes include literacy, numeracy, technology, differentiated instruction and high school completion.

Who creates AISI projects?
Collaboration in the school community is key to identifying learning needs and creating projects to benefit students.

How are AISI projects developed?
School authorities determine the processes to identify and develop projects in their areas.

What qualifies as an AISI project?
Specific goals for student growth, achievement and improvement in areas of knowledge, skills, attitudes or behaviours. Project requirements include a research base, focus on system priorities, demonstrated community involvement, and measurement.

Who can apply for an AISI project?
School jurisdictions submit their proposal(s) to Alberta Education for funding approval following submission guidelines set out in the *AISI Handbook for Cycle 3.* Individual schools do not submit proposals directly to Alberta Education.

Are all school jurisdictions involved with AISI?
Participation is voluntary and available to all Alberta school jurisdictions.

Can a school jurisdiction have more than one project?
Yes. Jurisdictions can have more than one project at a time.

Who is involved with project planning and implementation?
Teachers, principals, school staff, parents and school councils are appropriately involved in the various phases of project planning, implementation and evaluation.

How long can a project continue?
Most projects run for three years. Typically more than one year is required to achieve success. Evidence of progress must be demonstrated to obtain continued funding for additional years.

How do you know if a project is working?
Annual project reports are required. Evidence of success is determined by

analysis of evaluation information and movement toward set targets.

What happens if a project is not working?
A jurisdiction can withdraw a project that is not achieving its intent.

How is project success measured?
There should be an appropriate balance of local and provincial measures of performance that includes approved quantitative and qualitative measures.

PowerPoint

Following is a generic PowerPoint outlining key aspects of AISI.
http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/special/aisi/

AISI

Alberta Initiative for School Improvement

Improving Student Learning in Alberta

AISI Goal

To improve student learning and performance by fostering initiatives that reflect the unique needs and circumstances within school jurisdictions

AISI Education Partners

AE	Alberta Education
AHSCA	Alberta Home & School Councils' Association
ASBA	Alberta School Boards Association
ASBOA	Association of School Business Officials of Alberta
ATA	Alberta Teachers' Association
CASS	College of Alberta School Superintendents
University Faculties of Education	University of Alberta, Campus Saint-Jean, University of Calgary and University of Lethbridge

AISI Facts

Initiated in 1999

A program to improve student learning

Funded by Alberta Education

1,300 projects between 2000 and 2006

An Alberta success story

Cycle 3 – 2006 to 2009

AISI Attributes

1. Partnership
2. Catalyst
3. Student focused
4. Flexibility
5. Collaboration
6. Culture of Continuous Improvement
7. Evidence-based Practice
8. Research-based Interventions
9. Inquiry and Reflection
10. Building Capacity and Sustainability
11. Knowledge

AISI Impacts

1. Improved student learning
2. Culture of continuous improvement
3. Renewed focus on teaching and learning
4. Innovation and creativity
5. Shared language
6. Research in classrooms
7. New knowledge
8. Evidence-based decisions
9. Job-embedded professional development
10. Shared and distributed leadership
11. Engaged parents

External Comments About AISI

Taylor & Tubianosa (2001)	*Alberta's AISI (along with programs in Ontario and Quebec) are exemplars of how provinces can link assessment and school improvement to transforming results into plans of action.*
Learning Commission (2003)	*Major investments should continue to be made in educational research, particularly active, classroom-based research through the highly successful Alberta Initiative for School Improvement.*
Berliner (2004)	*AISI – what a lovely and sensible, research-based idea you all have put into effect, namely, that to improve schools at the local level one should base plans on the perceived needs of those at the local level.*
Reeves (2005)	*AISI is the gold standard of improvement models. Clear message to universities and support systems that claims of "research" are not worthy of the name if they do not reflect student achievement results.*

School Improvement Branch

School Improvement Branch (SIB)

Alberta Education

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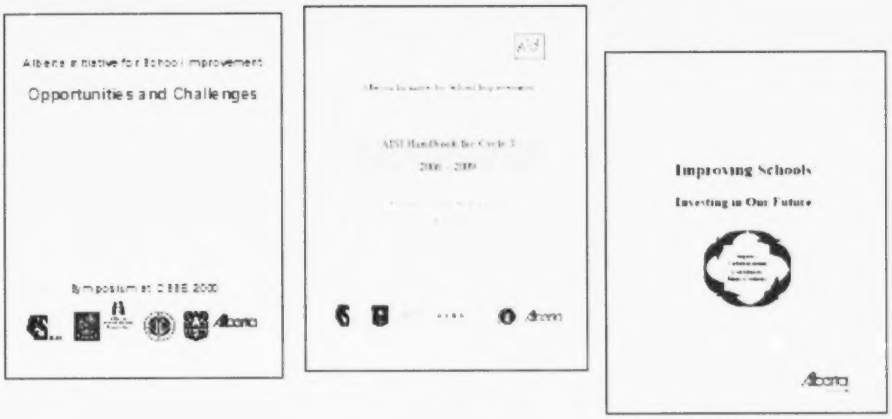
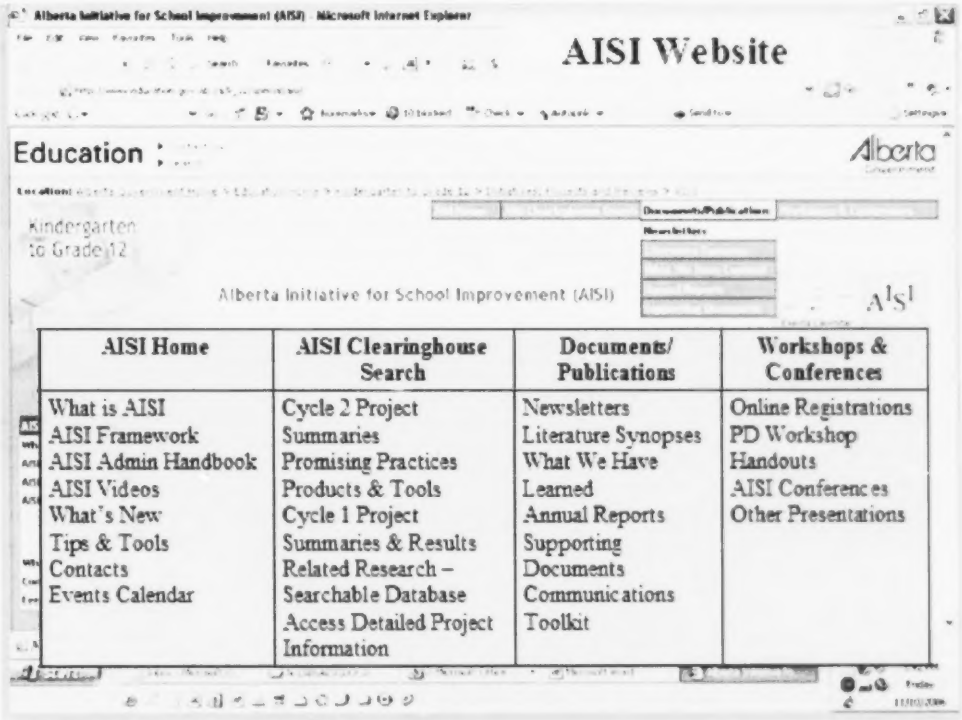
Toll-free at 310-000

Fax Number: (780) 415-2481

AISI Support Documents

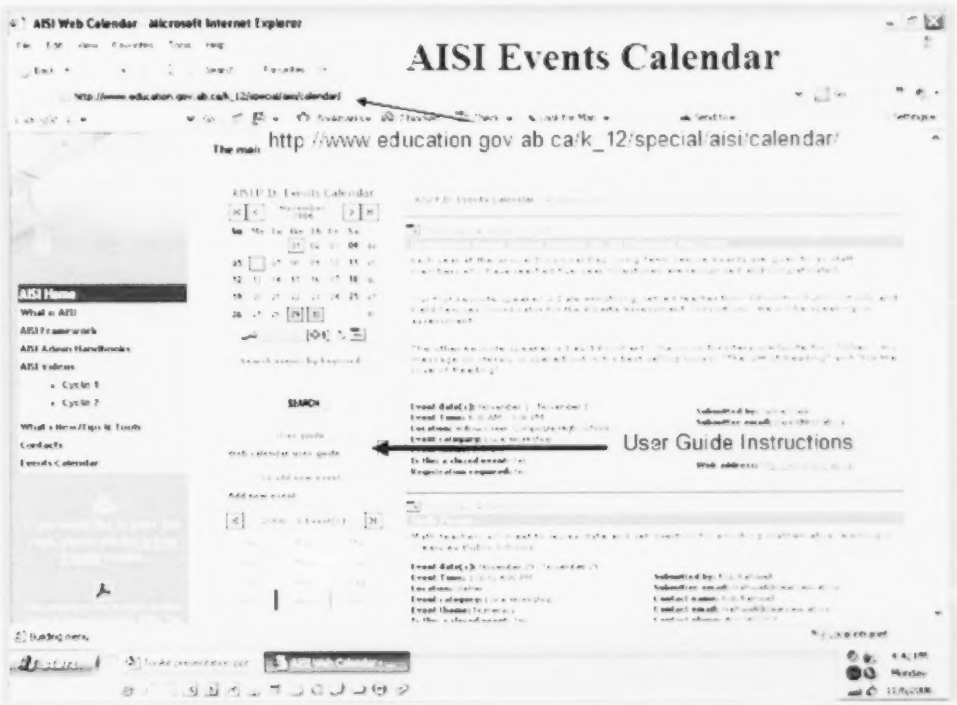


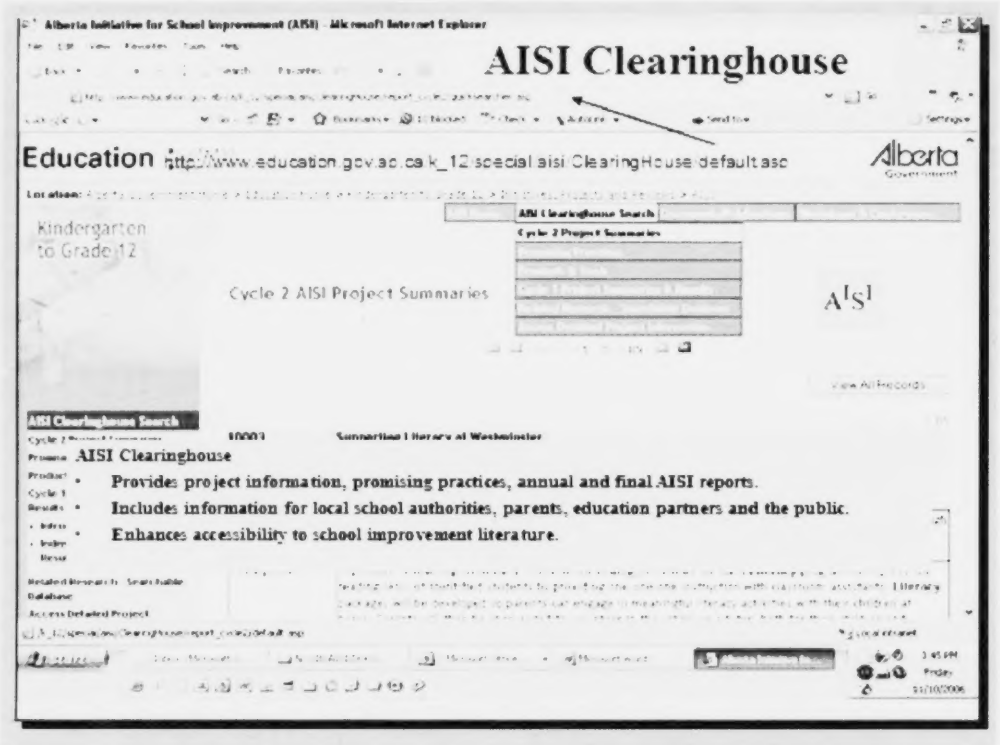
AISI Website



AISI Home	AISI Clearinghouse Search	Documents/ Publications	Workshops & Conferences
What is AISI AISI Framework AISI Admin Handbook AISI Videos What's New Tips & Tools Contacts Events Calendar	Cycle 2 Project Summaries Promising Practices Products & Tools Cycle 1 Project Summaries & Results Related Research – Searchable Database Access Detailed Project Information	Newsletters Literature Synopses What We Have Learned Annual Reports Supporting Documents Communications Toolkit	Online Registrations PD Workshop Handouts AISI Conferences Other Presentations

AISI Events Calendar




AISI Clearinghouse
Education
Kindergarten to Grade 12
Cycle 2 AISI Project Summaries
AISI Clearinghouse
Provides project information, promising practices, annual and final AISI reports.
Includes information for local school authorities, parents, education partners and the public.
Enhances accessibility to school improvement literature.

Media Releases

When providing information to the media about the success of your project, you may want to consider preparing a media release. Some key points to consider in preparing a media release:

- The first sentence should be the most interesting point about your project.
- Include the 5 W's (who, what, where, when and why). Explain to the reporter why your program is exciting.
- Include a really concise description of your project – think about how you would explain it to a family member, or to a student.
- It should include background information on what the AISI program is (such as pulling from the Q and A's or the fact sheet).
- Include a contact name and phone number – be sure that you include someone who will be available when the reporter calls. This will be very helpful to reporters when they get back to the news room.
- Establish a working relationship with local media. Sometimes it is good to pick up the phone and call the reporter first. Tell him/her what you are going to send and why it is interesting news.

Sample Media Releases:
News releases related to AISI projects.
http://www.teachers.ab.ca/Media+Room/News/2003/Engaging+education.htm
http://www.teachers.ab.ca/Media+Room/News/2003/Back+to+school+for+parents.htm
http://www.teachers.ab.ca/Media+Room/News/2003/One+day+three+years+in+the+making.htm

Alberta Education:
http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/news/2004/January/nr-AISIConference.asp

Chinook's Edge School Division:
http://www.chinooksedge.ab.ca/media/aisi_celebration.pdf

Calgary Board of Education:
http://www.cbe.ab.ca/Media/news/2004-2005NR/060105-01.asp

Battle River School Division:
http://www.brsd.ab.ca/news/2004/vision.htm

Media Release

(Insert logo if applicable)

Insert Date

Click here to insert headline 16-18 pt (should contain news, have a verb, not be uppercase)

Location (Where is the release being sent from)... First sentence (Lead) should be newsy and grab readers' attention. It should convey in a single sentence the most important aspect of the story.

- Include: who, what, where, when, why and sometimes how of your story.
- Explain: what makes it interesting and new? What makes it good for students?
- Be accurate
- Avoid jargon
- Spell names accurately
- Be clear about time and date if inviting reporters to special event.
- Include source of this news – someone reporter can quote or phone for more information.
- Try to keep to one page.

-30-

Attachments or Editor's Note: If you have a backgrounder or second page you might mention it here. Or if there is a special note for reporters, such as a time someone will be available for interviews or a note about FOIPP.

Media enquiries may be directed to:
Contact Name,
Title,
Department,
Phone,
Email,
Website (if applicable)

Videos/ DVDs

If you are considering developing a video/ DVD you may want to contact another jurisdiction that has put one together.

There are many things to consider when preparing a video/ DVD:

- How will you be using the video?
- Who are you trying to reach?
- Is a video the best product or will another communications tool work more effectively?
- How many copies will you need?
- What type of budget will you have/need?
- Will the company you work with have the ability to develop everything from start to finish – script/voiceovers/ interviews/ potential graphical elements/ cover design/ copies of DVD?
- What requirements might you need to meet if you want to post it online? You may need to purchase rights to music if you plan to post online, and you may need a specific format.

Video/DVD Contacts

School Authority	Contact	E-mail Address
Calgary Board of Education	Rose Bene	rebene@cbe.ab.ca
Clearview School Division	Rob Rathwell	rrathwell@clearview.ab.ca
Edmonton Catholic Schools	Don Delaney	delaneyd@ecsd.net
Elk Island Public Schools	Karla Satchwell	karla.satchwell@ei.educ.ab.ca
Prairie Rose School Division	Brian Andjelic	brian.andjelic@prrd.ab.ca
St. Paul Education	René LaFrance	rene_Lafrance@sperd.ca

Newsletters

You may have access to a jurisdiction or school newsletter and may want to consider highlighting your AISI project. Contact the person responsible for the newsletter and determine what you can provide to the publication.

Keep in mind that newsletter content is brief and similar to all other communications products highlighted in this package.

Some examples of other newsletters where your project can be highlighted:

School Improvement Scoop:
http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/special/aisi/aisidocs/nletters.asp

Links to AISI articles in *The ATA News*.
http://www.teachers.ab.ca/Quick+Links/Publications/ATA+News/Volume+40/Number+12/In+the+News/Jack+James+High+School+hits+the+mark.htm
http://www.teachers.ab.ca/Quick+Links/Publications/Other+Publications/Teaching+Students+with+Learning+Disabilities/Reflections+One+Year+Later.htm

AHSCA Newsletter: http://www.ahsca.ab.ca/pagePUBLICATIONS.htm

ASBA Newsletter:
http://www.asba.ab.ca/index.asp?section=news_and_views&page=hot_news.html

Magazines

The College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) publishes *The CASS Connection* each fall (November) and spring (March). Magazines are based on a theme. Contact Lee Lucente at lee.lucente@cass.ab.ca for specifications regarding articles you may wish to be considered for publication.

The ATA Magazine: http://www.teachers.ab.ca/Quick+Links/Publications/Magazine/

Samples of local jurisdiction newsletters

Grasslands Regional Division:
http://www.grasslands.ab.ca/aisi/AISI%20Newsletters/Newsletter%20(October).pdf

Palliser Regional Division: http://www.pallisersd.ab.ca/sites/aisi/index.htm

Websites and Internet

If you are considering how your AISI project may be highlighted on a website, you may wish to contact your jurisdiction office to determine if there is a section on that website where projects can be highlighted.

Keep in mind that website content should be brief and similar to all other communications products highlighted in this package.

Many school jurisdictions have effectively used e-mail, video and websites over the years to share and promote their AISI projects. As the Internet rapidly changes, 'free' tools are emerging that emphasize online collaboration and sharing among communities, and increased opportunities for AISI projects to move beyond text-based descriptions into spaces rich with images, video and audio.

To find out more information about how you might use these different spaces (and to locate online tutorials), search:

- www.wikipedia.org, or a search engine for the following keywords: *podcasting* (online audio), *wiki* (open collaborative spaces), *blogging* (web journalling).
- Google (http://www.google.ca)
- Alberta's Galileo Education Network (www.galileo.org)
- 2Learn.ca Education Society (http://www.2learn.ca)

All provide a large selection of free tools and examples of how you might communicate, share and present your AISI project work.

Remember that whenever images and information are publicly shared on the Internet, or online spaces are created for collaborative activities, careful consideration must be given to issues of privacy, ethics and FOIPP.

Some sample websites:
Alberta Education: www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/special/aisi/default.asp
Alberta Home & School Councils' Association: http://www.ahsca.ab.ca/
Alberta School Boards Association: http://www.asba.ab.ca/
Alberta Teachers' Association: http://www.teachers.ab.ca/
Association of School Business Officials of Alberta: http://www.asboa.ab.ca/
College of Alberta School Superintendents: http://www.cass.ab.ca/
University of Alberta: http://www.ualberta.ca/
University of Calgary: http://www.ucalgary.ca/
University of Lethbridge: http://www.uleth.ca/
Campus Saint-Jean: http://www.csj.ualberta.ca/

E. Evaluations

A word about evaluating your efforts

How will you assess the impact of your efforts to share information about your AISI projects with your community? Ideally, you should measure to see if more people know about your AISI project than before; however this requires sophisticated pre- and post-surveying of some form. Recognizing you probably don't have the resources at your disposal, here are some informal strategies for evaluating your plan.

- **Review your plan**
  Did you complete the activities you set out?
  How many people attended your events (if any)?
  How many articles appeared in the school newsletter?
  How many information flyers did you print? Distribute (to whom)? Post (where)?

- **If you pitched** an AISI story to the media, did it get coverage?
  How many stories were written?
  Were you satisfied with the stories?

- **Consult with the parents** you first got in touch with to begin the planning process.
  Were they satisfied with your efforts?
  Are they hearing more conversation about the AISI projects?

- **Have the school council complete an evaluation** form after your presentation.
  What was their response?
  Do the same thing for the staff and board presentation.

- **Gather** input and record feedback about your efforts throughout. Complete individual activity assessment reports on a continuous basis, track comments and maintain an evaluation file.

- **Online Survey Resources**
  - SySurveys.com -- free online survey development tool
  - Zoomerang Online Survey Creation http://www.zoomerang.com
  - www.surveymonkey.com
  - Effective schools reality check http://esrck.com

Survey design

When designing a survey, try to include more than one style of question. Ask some questions that can be answered by merely ticking a box or checking off "yes" or "no" but also ask participants to answer "open-ended" questions. You may wish to keep surveys as brief as possible to ensure a high response rate. While surveys are an effective way of gathering opinions and knowledge regarding programs, there is no way to ensure a 100 per cent response rate with this method of data collection. Consider using surveys as one way to collect data, supplemented by face-to-face interviews, the collection of anecdotal comments and other methods of getting feedback.

Survey template

Begin your survey with a short opening paragraph explaining the reasons for the survey, the name and contact information for the person coordinating the survey, how those being surveyed should return the survey, and the date you wish the survey returned. Remind those you are surveying that you feel their opinion is important.

Develop questions that are, as far as possible, free of jargon and easily understandable. Avoid questions that can be seen as leading questions – you want the opinion of others, not a validation of your own opinion.

Example

XYZ School Jurisdiction is currently involved in several Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) projects. We are currently evaluating how well we've communicated about these projects to the parents in our jurisdiction. We ask that you take a few minutes to fill out this survey and return it in an envelope marked "Survey", to your child's school. Your opinion matters!

1. XYZ jurisdiction's Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) projects that you've heard about deal with: (please check all that apply)
   - ❒ Literacy
   - ❒ Mathematics
   - ❒ Fine Arts
   - ❒ Special Education
   - ❒ Professional Development
   - ❒ All of the above

2. The information on these projects has been presented clearly and in language you found easy to understand.

   - ❒ Strongly agree
   - ❒ Agree
   - ❒ Somewhat agree
   - ❒ Disagree
   - ❒ Somewhat disagree
   - ❒ Strongly disagree

3. Please complete this sentence: "The best way to share information with me is to

   _____
   _____
   _____

4. How do you generally learn about in-school initiatives?

   - ❒ From students
   - ❒ From parents
   - ❒ From staff members
   - ❒ From local media sources (newspapers, radio stations)
   - ❒ By visiting the school and looking at displays
   - ❒ Other (please identify) _____

Additional comments

_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you.

F. Contacts

Partner Organization	Contact Name	Phone	Email
Alberta Education	Nelly McEwen	(780) 422-3210	nelly.mcewen@gov.ab.ca
Alberta Home & School Councils' Association	Michele Mulder	(780) 451-7145	michelem@ahsca.ab.ca
Alberta School Boards Association	Main Office	(780) 482-7311	kayers@asba.ab.ca
Alberta Teachers' Association	JC Couture	(780) 447-9462	jc.couture@ata.ab.ca
Association of Alberta School Business Officials of Alberta	Alberta Hutchings	(780) 449-6443	albertah@eics.ab.ca
College of Alberta School Superintendents	Ed Wittchen	(780) 826-3145	ed.wittchen@nlsd.ab.ca
University Faculties of Education	Jane O'Dea	(403) 329-2051	jane.odea@uleth.ca